

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

OBJECTS :

1. *To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.*
2. *To elucidate by news and quotation the spiritual issues at stake in the war.*

Number 88

JULY 10th, 1941

BRITAIN AND RUSSIA—THE NEW SITUATION

Readers may be glad to have before them, conveniently brought together, information concerning the new situation brought about by the attack of Germany on Russia, and concerning the bearing of this on the spiritual issues of the war. We quote a number of representative statements.

Mr. Eden (Leeds, July 5th), said :

"When it suited Hitler's purposes, the Red bogey was much in evidence; when it did not, the bogey was conveniently forgotten; and now the world is asked once again to believe in Hitler as a champion of the Christian churches.

"There are a thousand witnesses to deny him, though they cannot speak, for they are in prisons and concentration camps under German rule.

"From Protestant Pastors to the last imprisoned Polish or Yugoslav priest, their fate is testimony to Hitler's true attitude to the Christian Churches.

"Goebbels as a gallant Christian knight is surely too much for even the most gullible."

The Bishop of Guildford in his *Diocesan Gazette*, writes :

"What will be the outcome of this new act of aggression only the future can tell. At this moment two things are incumbent on us Christians : one is to pray more than ever for our leaders and the leaders of the American people in whose hands history has placed such great responsibilities. We must also pray for the common people of Russia. It is not of the Soviet regime or Soviet policy,

nor even at this time of Czarist Russia and what might have happened if it had been different, but of the peasants and common folk of Russia, at heart a people in whom religious faith still lives, that we should be thinking, and for whom we should be praying."

Dr. William Paton (in an Overseas broadcast) :—

"We think it a piece of utter hypocrisy for the Nazi Government to pretend to be fighting for Christian civilisation. It suits the Nazi rulers now to play that tune because they know that Communism has been anti-Christian and they think that because they are opposing Russia they will be regarded as suitable guardians around the Christian citadel. We are not deceived. What little country that the Nazi power has engulfed in these recent months thinks of the Nazi Government as the friend of Christian civilisation? Do the Dutch or the Norwegians, do the Poles or the Czechs? Do the French Christians, who have been struggling so manfully to succour the many thousands of refugees from Central Europe still in their midst? Do the Swiss, whose country has been so deeply influenced by Christian and democratic principles? On the contrary, they know, as the evidence before our eyes tells us, too, that there has appeared in modern times no enemy of a genuinely Christian way of life so merciless, so subtle and so efficient in its brutality as the Nazi power. As my friends on the Continent know, I am no friend of Russian

Communism; but it is not Russian Communists who are destroying the hopes of life and joy in the hearts of countless myriads of people, men, women and children, all over Europe to-day. It is not Communist Russia, but Japan, the ally of Nazi Germany, who is trying vainly to destroy the noble people of China, and Japan is buoyed up in her effort to commit successful piracy in the Far East by her belief that the Nazi power will help her.

"All over the free world there is a terrible hardening of men's hearts against Nazi Germany. Is it really possible for you to believe that this wide world of free men, slowly but deeply convinced that Nazi power is a menace to human freedom and to any civilisation that can be called Christian, should now turn and support the Nazis because, forsooth, they are fighting against the Russians? It has taken a great deal to convince the world that any government could be as devoid of moral principle as the Nazi Government has proved to be. People who told us the truth were not believed for the story seemed too bad to be true. Now we know that it is true and Poland and Czechoslovakia, Norway and Denmark, France, Holland and Belgium, Greece and Yugoslavia all tell the same story. The sad hosts of refugees from Nazi oppression here in England say the same.

"We cannot see that the kind of world the Nazi rulers would offer to the conquered nations is better than the worst the Communists could do. They destroy individual freedom, they turn law into a mockery. If it is said that there is a measure of Christian freedom in Germany which does not exist in Russia, we must reply that this is no true Christian freedom. They attempt to shut the Christian churches off from dealing with the life of man on this earth and to confine them to the affairs of heaven; they destroy Christian education; they undermine Christian morals. Are these marks of Christian civilisation that are going to resist Bolshevism? We do not believe that the Nazi rulers have any understanding of what Christian civilisation is, and we believe that in the hearts of Continental Christians, with many of whom we are linked in Christian fellowship, there will be real understanding of what we feel. We are not Bolsheviks

because we fight Germany; we stand with all who will stand with us for ending a tyranny which first of all conquered Germany and now is trying to conquer the world."

Cardinal Hinsley :

"The two Encyclicals of Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* against Atheistic Communism and *Mit Brennender Sorge* against Nazism, state fully and clearly the Catholic condemnation of both these movements. Our country with our Allies is fighting against the immediate Nazi attempt to subjugate Europe. No one who knows how anti-Christian the ideas and practices of the Nazis are, will for one moment be deceived by Hitler's latest pose as the champion of European civilisation, or think that it has become in any way less vital to resist his attempt to enslave the Continent."

Russian Orthodox :

An intercession service was held at St. Phillips, the Russian Orthodox Church, London, on Sunday, June 29th, 1941. The Reverend Vladimir Theokritoff officiated and addressed a large congregation of White Russians and other orthodox Slavs. In the Litany petitions were made for the deliverance of Russia "from the foe that had fallen upon her land and for divine aid to the armed forces of the British Commonwealth of nations."

U.S.A. :

Church opinion in U.S.A. on the new situation is not officially defined. In periodicals the decision is left to the individual conscience. *The Christian Century* (Isolationist) finds evidence that Britain is "no longer in imminent danger and new proof of cynical realities under European struggles." On the other hand, confirmed interventionist opinion remains unshaken. Thus *Christianity and Crisis* (30th June) writes: "The new venture may give Hitler the grain and oil he needs for a long war and increase the peril of a possible complete Nazi triumph. This with some unfavourable effects on the domestic situation where appeasement and sentiment in certain Catholic and big business groups is probably increased must prompt American opponents of Nazi tyranny to redouble their efforts. It proves the futility of the appease-

ment policy and collaboration with Hitler and may have a wholesome effect on those apostles who negotiated to peace. This is not the time to relax any efforts for a united position against Nazism."

OUR PROPAGANDA TO GERMANY— THE SPIRITUAL NOTE

Readers interested in our spiritual approach to Germany at the present time may like to read a translation of a recent talk delivered for Germany by a German Pastor resident in this country.

"Awake, awake, thou German land,
Slumbered hast thou long enough,
Remember what God made thee for
And why thou wast created. . . .

"So sang John Walter, one of our great musicians and poets, a friend of Martin Luther, four hundred years ago. And four years ago something different happened. In a town of Western Germany, where a week's mission was taking place, the responsible leaders were summoned before the Gestapo. After the usual unending questions and answers one of the officials said finally: 'Now must you make your meaning clear and decide whom you will serve—Adolf Hitler or this imaginary Lord of whom you always speak.' In between lay four hundred years, years in which God had surrounded the German people and sought to win them, as He has surrounded every nation; they were years in which true and brave witnesses proclaimed the Gospel of Grace which is freely given to us in Jesus Christ, but also proclaimed the task which we undertake when we submit ourselves to the Gospel of God. But they were 400 years in which, again and again, in answer to God's quest and invitation there came the answer, 'No.' First softly, hesitatingly, and then more loudly, until at last, for all to hear, it rang out loudly in the songs and marches of the stamping columns of to-day, and, finally, everywhere, through word, picture, music and book.

"It is clear to-day for whom those who have authority in Germany and many of their subordinates have decided or must decide. A *man* stands to-day where formerly God stood. From him people take their orders, which previously they

took from God. Of his fourteen-year-long Passion and of his victorious Resurrection people speak to-day, where previously they spoke of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Where we formerly heard that we must come to God through Jesus Christ, people say to-day: 'Whoever does not believe in Adolf Hitler believes in no God. Who breaks faith with him is a traitor and a rejecter of God.' Where people formerly spoke of the Blood of Christ which made us free, and where we once went reverently to the Altar of God to receive reconciliation with Him, people speak to-day of the steps of the Feldherrnhalle (in Munich) as the Altar of the new Germany.

"In this myth of the Führer and a so-called Aryan blood and its atoning strength must be found to-day the centre of thought and activity in art, economics, painting, religion, home and foreign politics. *He* must be the First Commandment. When it becomes clear—in fact it is already clear—who is the Lord in and over Germany to-day, it is seen that not only four but fourteen centuries of German history are being brought to a precipitous end. People may reply that just as each individual chooses his own religion, so a whole nation has the right and the duty to understand religion according to its own needs, that this is a matter of German home policy. Nothing is more false than that. At the Cross of Jesus Christ there is peace for all, not for individual persons or groups, but for all peoples. There appears their underlying unity and there can they learn what binds them together. True enough every people has its own history, its legends and psalms to which it clings, and in this sense every nation has its own *myth* and world outlook. But when German blood and German humanity clothes itself with divine value, where people lift up the Swastika as a religious symbol, there must the Cross of Christ be thrown down and there also must war be waged in order to bring it about by force, that no longer the Cross but the Swastika becomes the symbol of world unification. There is no shorter way to war than the acceptance of this myth.

"Some people reply that it is not paganism that is proclaimed to-day in Germany but, on the other hand, true and proper

Christianity now for the first time positively understood. To them we can only answer, a Christianity without Christ, a Christianity which is established according to ideals of blood and soil and race, and on behalf of an eternally glorious soil is no longer Christianity at all. It is not even paganism but something far worse and more dangerous. The pagan knows nothing of Christ, he is uninformed and therefore innocent. But that nation which has once been confronted by Christ can no more fall back on a defence of ignorance, but can only definitely reject Christ as He is revealed to us in Holy Scriptures; it becomes definitely anti-Christian. Therefore, whoever prescribes the present German world-outlook as a religion for Germany is not simply pagan, no exponent of a merely negative, neutral attitude; he stands on the side of Anti-Christ."

WAR AND THE WORLD CHURCH

Nine Churches are now represented on the Joint-Committee which is making the arrangements for Scotland's Week of Witness to the World Mission of the Church which is to be observed from November 30th to December 7th of this year. The Churches represented are: the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Congregational Union, the Episcopal Church in Scotland, the

Free Church of Scotland, the Methodist Synod, the United Free Church, the United Original Secession Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Society of Friends, while the Sunday School Union, the Student Christian Movement, the Scottish Ecumenical Youth Committee, and other youth organisations are also taking an important share in the preparations and showing keen enthusiasm for the World Church which youth realises is the one solution for present-day dissensions and difficulties.

During the Week of Witness mass meetings will be held in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. Among the speakers will be the Bishop of Chichester, the Rev. W. J. Noble, the Rev. A. M. Chirgwin, and the Rev. William Paton. Inter-denominational committees are being formed in every area of Scotland to carry out arrangements and they are getting to work immediately.

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Right Rev. Dr. J. Hutchison Cockburn, has given a great lead in connection with the World Church in his closing address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, emphasising as he did the oneness of the Church and that the day is past when the Churches can be content with their separate existences and work.

(Church of Scotland Press Bureau.)